



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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28 March 2011

IND103685.E

India: The Police Communication Network (POLNET); whether immigration authorities consult POLNET; conditions under which someone's name is placed in POLNET; whether the names of individuals who have been detained without charge are placed in POLNET; whether those persons whose names are placed in POLNET face restrictions when changing their residence
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Sources indicate that the Police Communications Network (POLNET) is a satellite-based network (India 8 Mar. 2011; *The Pioneer* 31 Mar. 2010; IANS 12 Mar. 2009). *The Pioneer*, a New Delhi-based newspaper, explains that POLNET's purpose is to integrate all police stations through improved voice, fax and data transmission capacity (31 Mar. 2010). Several sources report that POLNET is an internal communication system that is accessible only to police (India 8 Mar. 2011; *ibid.* n.d.d; Canada 23 Feb. 2011).

Information about whether POLNET was fully functional varied depending on the source consulted. In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Director of the Directorate of Coordination Police Wireless (DCPW), a division of India's Ministry of Home Affairs that provides advice and support regarding police telecommunications (India n.d.b), stated that POLNET is operational throughout all of India, including the state of Punjab (India 9 Mar. 2011). The DCPW's website indicates that POLNET's hub has been installed in New Delhi, and that there are 961 very small aperture terminals (VSATs) operating throughout India, including all state capitals and the district headquarters in each state (India n.d.a). The DCPW also notes that the network has a capacity to support approximately 1,500 VSATs to provide connectivity for voice, data and fax transmissions (*ibid.*).

Police in one state and one district in India report on their websites that POLNET is in use at their stations (Assam Police n.d.; Saiha District Police n.d.). For example, the Saiha District Police report that POLNET has been installed in their district and allows them to "easily communicate with other units throughout India" (*ibid.*). The Assam Police report that POLNET was implemented in Assam in 2005 and that during the inauguration ceremony a fax was transmitted from the police headquarters through POLNET to all districts in Assam (Assam Police n.d.).

However, an official at the High Commission of Canada in New Delhi, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, indicated that as of February

2011, POLNET was not yet fully operational in India (Canada 23 Feb. 2011). Media sources, writing in 2009 and 2010, reported stories in which some POLNET equipment was either not being used (*The Pioneer* 31 Mar. 2010) or was found to be faulty (IANS 12 Mar. 2009). According to *The Pioneer*, the annual report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, for the period ending 31 March 2009, indicated that plans for the erection of 140 towers for POLNET were suspended after the erection of just 65 towers due to conflicts with the contracting company; consequently, some equipment procured for POLNET was not in use (31 Mar. 2010). The Indo-Asian News Service (IANS) reports that POLNET was not functioning properly in the state of Tripura because the Remote Station Units (RSUs) in 34 of the 64 Tripura police stations had developed defects (12 Mar. 2009).

Use of POLNET by Immigration Authorities

Both the official from the High Commission of Canada in New Delhi and the Director of the DCPW stated that POLNET is not for use by Immigration authorities, as it is for internal police communication only (Canada 23 Feb. 2011; India 9 Mar. 2011).

Data sharing through POLNET

Information on the type of data shared through POLNET was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. The Canadian official stated that POLNET is intended to enable police to track suspects, witnesses and people accused of crimes (Canada 23 Feb. 2011).

The website of the DCPW indicates that POLNET provides the connectivity for interlinking the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) with state and district police headquarters (India n.d.a). According to the NCRB, it is implementing the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) project as part of the government's national e-governance plan (India n.d.c). One of the objectives of CCTNS is reportedly to "facilitate [the] collection, storage, retrieval, analysis, transfer and sharing of data and information among police stations, districts, state headquarters and central police organizations" (ibid.). Media sources report that government authorities plan to have the CCTNS operational by September or October 2011 (*Daily The Pak Banker* 24 Dec. 2010; UNI 6 Jan. 2011; The Press Trust of India 6 Jan. 2011). The NCRB director general reportedly told the media in December 2010 that the Bureau was providing both hardware and software to police stations so that individual police databases could be uploaded to the system (*Daily The Pak Banker* 24 Dec. 2010). Media sources also indicate that the government plans to link the CCTNS to approximately 14,000 police stations and 6,000 senior police officers throughout India (UNI 6 Jan. 2011; *New Indian Express* 29 Nov. 2010). According to the United News of India (UNI), the CCTNS will include information about criminals and minor and serious crimes (6 Jan. 2011). Information about whether the names of people who have been detained and released without charge would be available through the CCTNS could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Restrictions faced by POLNET-registered persons when changing residence

The official from the High Commission of Canada in New Delhi stated that individuals whose names are placed in POLNET do not face restrictions when changing their place of residence (Canada 23 Feb. 2011). This information could

not be corroborated among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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The Press Trust of India. 6 January 2011. "Crime Tracking Network System to Be

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact a representative of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), a human rights activist and a criminal justice professor were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response. An official at the High Commission of India in Ottawa, an official of the Punjab Police, and a political science professor were unable to provide information.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International (AI), Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR), CHRI, European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Freedom House, International Crisis Group, Punjab Police, South Asian Terrorism Portal (SATP), United Nations Refworld.

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